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## Care provided by specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists worth every cent

Media reports of alleged systematic charging above the Australian Medical Association's recommended rates by some doctors and specialists are examples of poorly researched and sensationalist reporting which conveniently ignore the facts in pursuit of a headline.

The President of the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG), Dr Stephen Lane, has condemned the reports as unrepresentative of the fees charged by the overwhelming majority of obstetricians and gynaecologists throughout Australia.

"The AMA fee is a guide only, and the majority of O&Gs across Australia charge well below AMA rates. The average out-of-pocket cost for delivering a baby throughout Australia is around \$2000, not the \$13,000 reported in the media," Dr Lane said.

"It is true that some doctors and specialists charge above the Medicare fee because the Government's schedule of fees has not kept pace with the Consumer Price Index. This represents a continued systemic under-investment in health. This means that specialties like obstetrics and gynaecology that have experienced high cost increases are now only partially funded by the Government. Unfortunately it is the consumer who is feeling the impact of this."

The cost of running a quality private practice includes high levels of nursing and administrative support, expensive state-of-the-art equipment and high medical indemnity costs.

There has also been journalistic comment that 40 per cent of privately insured women now choose to deliver in public hospitals due to increased out-of-pocket costs. Dr Lane states that personal choice about the multiple other models of care currently available is also a significant factor.

"NASOG supports the right for a woman and her family to choose the model of care that suits her unique circumstances. It is unfortunate that out of pocket costs may play a significant role in that decision making for privately insured women," he said.

Dr Lane said obstetricians and gynaecologists are highly trained specialists, working on call for long periods, with their practices providing care 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"Obstetricians in private practice co-ordinate a multidisciplinary team including midwives, physicians, anaesthetists, paediatricians and other medical colleagues as required. Our patients value this service greatly," he said.

"Australia is recognised as one of the safest countries in the world to have a baby, and this is a reflection of the world class education our specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists undertake, with many completing more than 12 years of study and training.

"NASOG believes that the care provided by specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists is worth every cent to the patients who enjoy improved health outcomes as a result of our professional care."

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**For all Media Inquiries**, please contact NASOG CEO Caroline Khalil on 0400 101 109.

About NASOG: The National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG) is a not-for-profit professional association representing specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists, the leading providers of specialist women's health services.

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NASOG is Australia's professional body for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

